"JAZZY BELLE RETELL/TALE": TOWARD A FRAMEWORK OF SONIC BLACK GIRLHOOD

BY

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THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Education Policy, Organization and Leadership
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2015

Urbana, Illinois

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Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of the creation and performance of the song "Jazzy Belle Retell/tale" created by Jessica Robinson, a member of the black girl band, *We Levitate*. This thesis explores the making of the retell/tale of a popular song by the hip hop group, *OutKast* as a practice of black girlhood music making. Moreover, this thesis will investigate the use of this music making as a tool for decolonizing research on and about Black girls' lived experiences and their artistic visions. Ultimately, I seek to develop a language for a framework I am naming, sonic black girlhood to conceptualize the sounded artful lives of Black girlhood experience.

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION/JAZZY BELLE

Overview

In this thesis, I conceptualize "sonic black girlhood" (Robinson, 2014) as a framework for exploring the relationship between Black girl knowledge production and the creation, performance and consumption of music about and/or by Black girls. More specifically, I examine the creation and performance of "Jazzy Belle Retell/tale" (2014), a reimagined tale of the song "Jazzy Belle" (1996) by the Southern hip hop duo, OutKast. This re-imagined tale, "Jazzy Belle Retell/tale", was created and performed by the black girl band, "We Levitate", a group which I am a creative member. Furthermore, the making of this music is a praxis of black girlhood and hip hop feminism. I use "praxis" here in the way Richa Nagar and Amanda Lock Swarr (2004) conceptualize it with regard to transnational feminisms, positioning praxis as a "mediated processes through which theory and practice are deeply woven with one another" and emphasizing that these processes are connected to reflecting on collective situated knowledges (p. 6). Like wise I define black girlhood through Ruth Nicole Brown's (2009) definition as "the representations, memories, and lived experiences of being and becoming in a body marked as youthful, Black and female". To further explore this definition of black girlhood in relation to "Jazzy Belle Retell/tale", I use Aisha Durham's (2007) definition of hip hop feminism as a "socio cultural, intellectual and political movement grounded in the situated knowledge of women of color from the Post-Civil Rights generation who recognize culture as a pivotal site for political intervention to challenge, resist and mobilize collectives to dismantle systems of exploitation (p.306). Each of these feminist frameworks help to situate the theoretical and practical nature of sonic black girlhood. Ultimately, this conceptualization of "sonic black

girlhood" is to serve as an autoethnographic arts-based research approach to decolonizing the research on and about black girls.

This thesis is organized into 6 sections. In the section that follows, I explore the content of the original song "Jazzy Belle" as performed by OutKast, using thick description (Geertz, 1997) of the lyrics as well as give context to the song's relation to the lived experiences of black girlhood. In the second section, I detail my thesis and research questions. In the third section, I review literature on black girlhood and hip hop feminism for the purpose of connecting the creation and performance of "Jazzy Belle Retell/tale" to current academic literature about Black women and girls and art making. The fourth section provides context on the space that allowed for "Jazzy Belle Retell/tale" to be actualized. This section includes details of Saving Our Lives, Hear Our Truths (SOLHOT) and the music group "We Levitate". I detail the importance of the pace of SOLHOT and it's musical group, "We Levitate" as imperative to the development of "Jazzy Belle" through its practice of collective creating and use of feminist principles which ultimately show the power of black girlhood as an organizing construct. In the fifth section, I detail the process of creating "Jazzy Belle Retell/tale" as an autoethnographic arts based research practice. This section describes the creative process and performance of the retell as well as how my creative process connects to arts-based research methodology (Leavy, 2008) and performance ethnography (Denzin, 2003, Spry, 2011). Lastly, the sixth section explores the implications and use of sonic black girlhood as a function of black girlhood studies to develop a language for highlighting the very important connections of music to the lived histories of Black girls.

Jazzy Belle: Traveling to 1996 with OutKast

In order to explore "Jazzybelle Retell/tale" fully, I will first detail the original song, "Jazzy Belle" by southern rap duo, OutKast, as "Jazzybelle Retell/tale" was created as a response to the original song. It is the voice of Jazzy Belle, a fictional but true to life character in the original song, who guided this remixed creation. OutKast introduced us to Jazzy Belle on the 1996 "ATLiens" album. Outkast is a multi award winning, southern hip hop duo. They were introduced to us with their first album "Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik" in 1992. The group stepped on the music scene with a Southern sound and style, unique, in a New York centric hip hop scene. OutKast functioned as a duo within a family of musicians known as The Dungeon Family. This group of artists created a sound from the South that functioned as a vehicle for the South to be heard at a post civil rights moment. As a group, they have created seven albums (six studio albums and one compilation album) which have granted them six Grammy awards, multiple gold and platinum certifications as well as establishing them as appealing to multiple audiences while still attempting to create the music they loved. OutKast gave us complex stories of pimps and gangsters while also offering politically conscious material on the status of Black people in the South and more importantly, highlighting the fluidity of Black life. OutKast used their accents, dirty south grit and Dungeon Family collective creativity to offer us something raw, on the margins and a mix of Black music forms such as funk, blues, soul, spoken word and hip hop.

The particular tale from OutKast I'm discussing is the story of Jazzy Belle. Jazzy Belle was the "fast girl". She was described as noticeable to the two Black male artists but needing guidance to fix her path. Jazzy was the girl who had potential but just didn't "love herself" enough or see herself as good enough and as a result the artists sonically create a narrative of the

Black girl everyone fears will be their daughter- the "ho". The song includes multiple references to what and who a Jazzy Belle could be. It starts off alluring. Andre' 3000, ½ of the duo, draws us in with words that sound like love. He compares his love of Jazzy Belle to the love of those things people hold in high regard: motherland, queens, royalty. He melodic voice moves you to almost close your eyes and wish you were Jazzy Belle. He tells us how he is writing these lyrics and flows just for us Jazzy Belles and they are indeed, beautifully crafted and even sweet like southern tea. Then you notice that this Jazzy Belle label may not be exactly what Black girl lovers of Jazzy Belle thought we signed up for. In conjunction with Big Boi, the other ½ of the duo, the song continues with detail of this Jazzy Belle's life including reference to her exploiting people for money, hanging around boys/men and even their interest in her. What becomes most provocative is the insertion that they could be the savior for Jazzy Belle. Their concern and disdain for her behavior is coupled with the want to save her was once an urge that I, too, couldn't resist once upon a time. Almost 20 years ago when Jazzy Belle was released, I said- "yes, save the girls", "Jazzy should love herself enough to not want to be sexualized". "Jazzy should want to be a (insert respectable profession)." "Jazzy is exactly what I don't want people to think I am"- except I was; the inconvenient "truth"

I was Jazzy Belle and so were my friends. A hoochie. A girl who liked attention. A girl who flirted and rode in cars with boys- often as well as a girl who didn't exclusively date boys. I consumed Jazzy Belle like everyone else did- on tapes and compact discs, through sonic translations that turned into visuals of things we feared. I feared being "fast". I feared being the subject of songs like "Jazzy Belle". Almost 20 years later, I prepared to retell Jazzy Belle's story, to disrupt the sound of Black girlhood in narrative and retell the story of Jazzy Belle, who I identified with as a reflection of my own Black girlhood and who should be recognized as

important. Far too often, we praise girls for their future potential and not who they are in the present, continuing to trap them in binaries the white supremacist society we live in creates about girlhood.

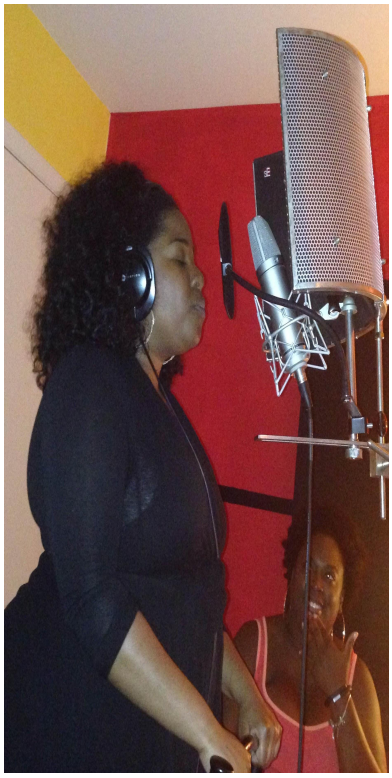

Figure 1: Jessica Robinson & Porshe Garner, Black Star Studio, 2014

Photo by Ruth Nicole Brown

Importantly, as I created the "Jazzy Belle Retell/tale", I didn't know what I would be making. I knew that I would be putting some words to what I wanted to tell OutKast about what I had to say about their tale. Jazzy Belle had been on my mind for a while. When I initially started to think about Black girlhood six years ago in 2008, I betrayed Jazzy Belle. I openly thought Jazzy Belle needed some fixing. However, Jazzy Belle fixed me. I relistened to Jazzy Belle after a semester of thinking and rethinking Black girlhood and made up with Jazzy Belle. A reunion that was contingent upon me not breaking her heart again. My mission with "Jazzy Belle

Retell/tale" was/is not about competing with OutKast on who did it better or even about "calling them out". It was about reimagining Black girlhood from memories, futures and the present- on my own terms. In Black woman artist tradition, I time traveled to revisit the moments where I loved, hated, celebrated and ran from my Jazzy Belle self. Renina Jarmon describes this traveling as being "central to Black women artists who use it to interrogate questions of freedom and imagine the future" and I would add rethink the past (2012). Music allows us to time travel. We can go back and forth with our listening. A song from 1989 can be revisited for everyday of 2014 as if it were still playing on the radio in heavy rotation through our use of technology such as digital music databases, compact discs, cassettes and vinyl. It is a sonic archive of memories, moments and experiences that hold some of our most brilliant and precious truths about our lives, and in my case, a life defined by black girlness.

"Jazzy Belle Retell/tale" was a betrayal of not only current arts-based research practices but also a betrayal of our wants and needs of capturing blackgirlness as palatable. To sonically decolonize blackgirlness through Jazzy Bell Retell is to say, "we be Black girls and I love yall in the present moment" (We Levitate, 2014). It is to unmark the bodies and minds of Black girls from what we think we know is best for them. It is to remap our desires for the research of Black girlhood on to works that innovate form and transform us- not replicate the imperialist White supremacist capitalist patriarchy (hooks, 2003) structure. Sonic Black girlhood uses Black girlhood as an organizing tool that does not accept ideas that tell us to "help" those "less than" us for purpose of rearranging them. It says you don't own this/me/us (purposely including us all) and it is work that is love labor- hard but needed.

"Jazzy Belle Retell/tale" allowed me to rethink self, memory and research. In a space (education) that does not always privilege narrative on the speaker's terms, Jazzy Belle allowed

me to sound it and make it real. Black girlhood is the framework that allows for the "truth" to exist and arts-based research is the platform that allows for the truth to be heard from the speaker's experience with music and narrative as the vehicles.

SECTION 2
THESIS/RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This project, at its very core, started in 1996 when the song "Jazzy Belle" by OutKast was released although I didn't know it then. I was born in St. Louis, MO where your radio stations sound like you are further past the Mason-Dixon line than you really are. This home sweet home of mine feels like every bit of a Black Great Migration locale where folks remember that years of family history exist in pockets of Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama and Georgia from our food to our music. Music in St. Louis sounds like Cadillacs with fresh washes, fried fish and grits, (although we eat spaghetti, pickles and raw onions with our fish). St. Louis loves southern rap. UGK, OutKast and 8Ball & MJG were always on the radio in the 90s. OutKast is a popular southern rap duo who captured many of us who were young, Black and jammin' with their smooth old-school riding grooves and futuristic beats. I loved those sounds mixed with the voices of the Mutron Angels (Joi Gilliam, Keisha Jackson and Debra Killings) who graced many of the OutKast songs filling them with a soulful, funk presence. Those beautiful sounds of girl Blackness mixed with the smooth yet gritty Southern drawl of Big Boi and Andre' 3000, made OutKast the special sound for feeling wrapped in the music.

"Jazzy Belle", from OutKast's sophomore album, *ATLiens*, was constantly on replay on my tiny boombox which was always equipped with a radio "dubbed" tape I made for the exact purpose of repeating songs continuously. As the years went on, I would revisit the song Jazzy Belle often. As I listened to it over the years, the song meant different things to me. At first, I was listening to it because I loved OutKast and I loved the sound of the mix of vocals and beat. I then transitioned to actually thinking about the subject of the song, Jazzy Belle.

I thought about who this girl was, what she stood for and also the need for this song. I also thought about my relationship to the song and what kept me coming back to it. In the immediate years that followed the song's release, I was in a moment where my Black girl self was afraid to be anything but "good". I nodded in agreement with Andre' for more than just his beautifully crafted rhymes. I nodded because being a "queen" was what I wanted but not because I didn't feel good about myself. I wanted that title so other people would feel good about me. I nodded because I, too, was afraid of Jazzy Belle. Not because I wasn't like her but because I was taught from media, family and my environment that being opposite Jazzy would be my ticket to being a good girl. It was the fear of being anything but "good", a white supremacist, respectability politics offense for those of us identifying as Black and girl (Jones, 2009). My examination of this happened a few years after the song's release. What I was focusing on at this time was the story of Jazzy Belle and my connection to her was that I felt sorry for girls like her, at that time. As more time passed, I thought more about her as I listened to the song. I went from feeling sorry for her to actually realizing that I was Jazzy Belle. I was a girl who couldn't fit the mold of what people wanted of me, even if I hid it well. For clarification, I am saying that, the song made it clear that there were so many expectations for what Black girls were supposed to be that even if I didn't do many of the things detailed in Jazzy Belle, there were at least one or two things I did or would do. I let those feelings of pity go because I couldn't and wouldn't feel sorry for myself. I was Jazzy Belle because the person they were describing could have been any one girl I grew up with. What stood out as I thought about Jazzy Belle as a character of OutKast tale, was the mix of pity and disgust they had for Jazzy Belle while also reconciling with their own issues. The girl they were describing was really just their fears of not being able to control or capture Black girl bodies including sexuality in the boxes they wanted. This fear plays out in

different ways across the song but it is apparent through Andre's worry about the young women not being "queens" to Big Boi's disdain for them sleeping with more than one person or knowing them from around the way. Jazzy was the "fast girl". She was described as noticeable to the two male artists but needing guidance to fix her path. Jazzy was the girl who had potential but just didn't "love herself" enough or see herself as good enough and as a result the artists sonically create a narrative of the Black girl everyone fears will be their daughter, a girl no one can capture.

Beyond the enticing sound and beautifully spoken lyrics I thought about why did Jazzy Belle scare us? I went beyond but also inside my love for OutKast to find Jazzy Belle and find my own way to talk about her. Moreover, many of the things detailed were about the duos wants, regardless of their behavior, and I couldn't help but think "well, what would Jazzy, a musical portrait of a Black girl, say back to this?"

As a student of performance and an arts-based researcher, I thought about the ways recreating Jazzy Belle's story was imperative to theorizing Black girls and women's knowledge production as a part of black girlhood studies. With Jazzy Belle at the heart of an arts-based research project invested in black girlhood, interrogating Black girl creative musical practices via the consumption and performance of music, *sonic black girlhood* is a praxis for decolonizing the research on and about Black girls. With this in mind, the research questions of this thesis are as follows:

1) How does the creation, performance and consumption of music interrogate black girlhood and the knowledge production of Black girls and women?

2) What is the relationship between arts-based research and black girlhood studies and how does staging the conversation between the two improve the lives of Black girls??

I interrogate these questions through examining Black girls and their relationship to music making and consumption as well as investigating the current research on art-based research methods to tell a story about loving the Black girl self in spite of scripts imposed by white supremacy, exemplified by my recreation of "Jazzy Belle" through the "Jazzy Belle ReTell/tale" as a method of transforming research practices to show the things most important to Black girls as defined by Black girls. While this arts-based research method is central to this project, it is important to first explore the relationship of Black girls' studies and hip hop feminism as a way to make a clear connection how the theories associated with them allow for this arts-based research to exist. In the section that follows, I will give a review of the literature related to hip-hop feminism as a means for investigating Black girls and women's relationship to art and music making. In addition, I will review black girlhood studies literature to connect hip hop feminism and girlhood studies to the creation of Jazzy Belle Retell/tale for purpose of conceptualizing sonic black girlhood.

SECTION 3
LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of this thesis will explore the literature of hip hop feminism in order to develop a sonic black girlhood (Robinson, 2014) framework. I will start with a definition of Black girlhood as defined by Ruth Nicole Brown (2009) and hip hop feminism as defined by Aisha Durham (2007) to structure hip hop feminism as the theory that explains the practices of creative black girlhood. I will then connect the literature of hip hop feminism to the action of music making and consumption within the lived experience of Black girls. Lastly, I will tie each of these thematic sections of literature into a working definition of sonic black girlhood.

While I will be using a specific definition of black girlhood developed by Ruth Nicole Brown (2009) in this paper, there are many foundational texts that look at the lives of Black girls that must be acknowledged. These texts have allowed academic work focused on black girl lives to exist. Whether in relation to school (Carter, 2007; Evans- Winters, 2005; Fordham, 1993; Grant, 1994; Morris, 2007), relationships with the State (Cox, 2005; Stevens; 2002; Roberts, 2003), or research on historical U.S. slavery and black children (King, 1995, 2005), these texts have been foundational for thinking about Black girl lives and the liberties to live them. However, for this particular project, I want to look specifically at Black girlhood through Brown's definition as "the representations, memories, and lived experiences of being and becoming in a body marked as youthful, Black and female" (2009). I will use Brown's definition to connect the experiences of Black girls and the creative crafting of our realities through music to develop sonic black girlhood.

Importantly, hip hop feminism builds from black feminism. It is important to engage black feminist literary foremothers such as Toni Morrison (The Bluest Eye, 1970), bell hooks (Bone Black, 1999), June Jordan (Soldier, 2001) and Toni Cade Bambara (A Girls' Story, 1977) use of the creative power to remember ourselves and to develop the stories we know best. As described in the 2013 article, "The Stage Hip Hop Feminism Built", hip hop feminism is a "generation(ally) specific articulation of feminist consciousness, epistemology, and politics rooted in the pioneering work of multiple generations of black feminists based in the United States and elsewhere in the diaspora (Durham et al., 2013)". As a historical lineage, hip hop feminism continues the work of black feminisms to write, dance, sing and humainze the lives of Black women and girls in a post civil rights era while also acknowledging our foundations built by elders and ancestors. These are the foundations for thinking about how experiences as Black, girl and young develop a sonic life born from creativity. To develop this more, I will use the theory of hip hop feminism.

In 1999, Joan Morgan published "When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost", a groundbreaking memoir which led to the creation of "hip hop feminism" as an idea. As an expansion of her work, Aisha Durham defines hip hop feminism as the:

> "Socio-cultural, intellectual and political movement grounded in the situated knowledge of women of color from the Post-Civil Rights generation who recognize culture as a pivotal site for political intervention to challenge, resist and mobilize collectives to dismantle systems of exploitation" (p. 306).

Hip Hop and the immense cultural effect it has is an important location to examine art making and building. However, the genre has been dominated by the idea that hip hop is a "boys game". Importantly, however, as ethnomusicologist Kyra Gaunt (2006) describes in her book

"The Games Black Girls Play" that when it comes to black popular music culture, "girls are it's primary agents" (183). In the same way Gaunt asserts that Black girls are the originators of black popular music culture, including hip hop, Pough (2004) asks us "What does it mean to be a woman in the hip-hop generation, attempting to claim a space in a culture that constantly tries to deny women voice?" (2004, p. 11). To answer this question she hopes that her text *Check It While I Wreck It* will call attention to the ways in which the [Hip-hop] culture has been a site of contention for the girls and women who love it and participate. Pough goes on to state that she hopes "black feminism will take up the cause and utilize the space that hip-hop culture provides in order to intervene in the lives of young girls" (2004, p.11). With this in mind, we can draw the genealogy between hip hop feminism and black feminism. Hip Hop feminism is the connection to taking up the space that even though Black women and girls created and utilized for years, had been deemed not a girl space, for creative making. An example of this is artist-scholar Enongo Lumumba, musically known as Sammus. She writes about her first hand experience with how gendered hip hop making can be. She writes,

> "I can recall with great clarity as my older brother first beat Metroid and my own assumptions about gender were thrown in my seven-year-old face. Still, I didn't think my ability to make beats would be so difficult for some people to accept. I never heard anyone asking my male producer friends who "helped them" with their beats. It was through these experiences that I began to wear my production skills as a badge of my feminism—a powerful gift that I could use to counter the assumption that women can't play with computers"

At the very young age of seven, Lumumba was already making beats. She was already a hip hop creative. Girls have been creating the popular sounds we love to hear for years. The

groove of R&B, the grit and glam of hip hop and the sultry allure of blues, girls have always been active creators and participants. However, much of what we choose to remember about hip hop and girlhood is the brutality and harm experienced through the culture, rhythm and rhymes. One of the main areas of focus is the misogyny of hip hop and the sexual scripts it prescribes to girls.

Carla Stokes (2007) states, "concerned parents, scholars, colleges/universities, girl-serving organizations, magazines, filmmakers, rap artist, and Black women and girls have raised questions about the potential influence of derogatory sexual messages in hip-hop-influenced popular culture on the sexual and psychological development of Black adolescent girls" (p. 170). Commercialized, or mainstream, hip hop has been criticized for its hypersexual and deviant representations of Black women and girls (Stokes &Gant, 2002; Stephens & Phillips, 2003; Pough, 2004; Bullock, 2006; Stokes, 2007). However, as Porshe' Garner (2013) reminds us "concerns of scholars and stakeholders surrounding the ways in which hip-hop music acts as socialization and a space of resistance for youth are needed." She goes on to say "redirecting the concern to explore how Black girls make sense of these images, allows for Black girls to use music as a creative expression to (re)create stories regarding their lived experience"(p.33). This concept of allowing for girls to use hip hop in the ways they see fit, which includes creating their own, can be linked to the "doing" of hip hop feminism as expressed by Brown & Kwayke (2013) as "hip hop feminist pedagogy". Hip Hop feminist pedagogy functions as such:

> (1) appreciates creative production expressed through language, art or activism, (2) privileges the in-betweenness of a black girl epistemology or a black feminist standpoint, (3)values and cares about the shared knowledge produced by black womens' and girls' presence, (4) interrogates the limitations and possibilities of

> hip hop, feminism and pedagogy and is, therefore, self adjusting, (5) stages the political through performance-based cultural criticism, (6) and is located and interpreted through a community (or communities) in which it is immersed (p.4).

With this pedagogy in mind, we can think of the ways in which creating the works and art we want to reflect our experiences. Experiences that are so unique and complex. The way we say it. The way we make it. The way we own it. All of these things are unique. We create a flipped remix for so many things that others have tried to label as "bad" that keep us yearning to be "good". However, Joan Morgan writes about how the complexity of Black girl/women relationship to hip hop is so very important in thinking of how and what we create. Morgan (1999) writes about the "truth" in hip hop. That is the space where the likes of Lil Kim and Queen Latifah can exist at the same time. In the way that Black women and girls lives are complex in so many ways, there is space for shorts skirts and baggy pants in the spaces that women create within hip hop. In a recent TED talk, Chimamanada Ngozi Adichi, talks about the way complexities of experiences matter. She states "stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity. (2012). Her details of the way stories work is indeed the complexity of Black girls stories and realities. In relation to hip hop and hip hop feminism, this concept matters because even if we use the same tools (rhyming, dancing, writing, singing) we may say very different things and all those things said matter. Brown (2013) argues that art is not just singing, painting and drawing but also the doing of things creatively. We can look at the crafting of blogs as a site for this creativity. There we find experts of culture. An example of this blackgirl blogger Sesali Bowen (2013), creator of "The Bad Bitch Society". She talks about the ways in which the

complexity and nuance of hip hop culture allows us to see Black girl innovation. She writes:

> "I often find that the irony, complexity, and sometimes hypocrisy of my relationship to today's Hip-Hop are beyond me. But what I do understand is that it represents the voice of my generation. A voice I feel is valid despite the fact that it may be littered with profanity and messages so self-destructive that they give life itself a new meaning as we try to survive it all. I relate and identify with a generation and culture that has learned to replace man with "nigga" and woman with "bitch," to the extent that as a woman, the highest honor you can receive is that of a "bad bitch." For now, I will accept that. If being a bad bitch is how I earn respect, so be it"

Bowen, takes us on a word journey to see the complexities of hip hop and its relation to the people of it's generation and beyond. Most important to this point by Bowen in relation to involvement and use of hip hop culture and black girls, is her ability to make it plain that what people create may not be what we want or expect but it is indeed a reflection of our lives. With Bowen's complex look at words and the way they show our experiences, we can see the ways hip hop evolves for living for its creators and consumers.

In the development of sonic black girlhood, I hope to think of Black girl relationships to music as a sonic living. With a solid definition of black girlhood and a theoretical language from hip hop feminism to show the making of culture from black girls, in community, in particular, I hope to think about the relationship as an active one and not as Black girls being "duped" as merely consumers (Brown, 2009). We are illustrating our experiences through what we make whether it shows up in a way that is digestible or a way that makes folks cringe. In the next

section, I will give a detail of the community that allowed for this sonic black girlhood framework to be developed.

SECTION 4
WE LEVITATE, NEXT LEVEL SOLHOT AND JAZZY BELLE RETELL

It is important to this paper to give a history of SOLHOT (Saving Our Lives, Hear Our Truths) and the formation of "We Levitate". The "Jazzy Belle Retell/tale" was created because of these two spaces. These two spaces, which are a part of one another, gave not only the physical space for "Jazzy Belle ReTell/Tale" to be created through songwriting and music production but also functioned as a pedagogical guide of remembering what is important about the saying, singing and speaking of our experiences, memories and constant vivid living of black girlhood. Moreover, a deep description of SOLHOT and "We Levitate" and their purpose will help make explicit the connection of the praxis of black girlhood and music making.

In 2006, Dr. Ruth Nicole Brown, the visionary of SOLHOT, along with a group of undergraduate students, graduate students and Champaign-Urbana community members, began the implementation of SOLHOT. Brown had been working with the Boys and Girls Club as a volunteer and was encouraged by Program Director, Regina Crider, to create her own program. This proved to be the beginning of something bigger than that moment. From that moment, SOLHOT has been a collective that uses Black girlhood as an organizing tool. Black Girlhood, as defined in SOLHOT, is not a fixed identity marker but a boundless political articulation that intentionally centers Black girls while simultaneously going beyond those who identify as Black girls (Brown, 2013). SOLHOT is an intergenerational demonstration of how Black girlhood is a praxis to deconstruct restrictions and ideologies that prevent girls especially, from having freedom to be themselves. SOLHOT is committed to not only privileging Black girls but is also uniquely a space that collectively recognizes Black women and girls. Moreover, SOLHOT recognizes the fluidity between girlhood and womanhood for Black girl and women is ever

present in our space as we recognize the contributions, brilliance and knowing of Black women and girls is complex and happens at various ages.

Brown (2009) uses "space" in relation to SOLHOT in the way John Jackson Jr.'s defines it as, "real and imagined, spaces can tell stories or unfold histories, spaces to be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary practice" (p. 136). We use space to signal that SOLHOT is boundless and it can happen in many different places when Black women and girls are organizing with Black girlhood at the center. It allows us to take SOLHOT beyond a specific time and place. Nine years since it's origination, SOLHOT has operated in two high schools, two middle schools, the Boys and Girls Club as well as two libraries spanning across central IL. Brown states, "The goal is to create a space that facilitates collective action, and then to organize that space so the girl with so much to say can say it, the girl with nothing to say can dance it, and the girl who wants to say it, but cannot write, will learn" (2009, p. 22). It is in the practice of SOLHOT where the ability to articulate experiences and knowledge of lived experience, contested histories and institutional realities is not only privileged but also cultivated. Black women and girls and those who love us, all work with each other to create, build and record our expressions of Black girl brilliance.

SOLHOT depends on relationships between homegirls and lil homies. Porshe' Garner (2013), SOLHOT homegirl, explains the terms "homegirl" and "lil homie" as terms of endearment to signify the unidirectional love and respect between volunteers and young girl participants (p.14). Through this relationship, homegirls and lil homies use our space to engage in artful expression such as dancing, singing, writing as well as the poetics of black girl conversation to express ourselves and share our thoughts, wants and experiences. These experiences allow for what Elaine Richardson (2013) labels within SOLHOT as "critical feminist

literacies". The exchanges in SOLHOT are collective knowledge building from people who respect the power of black girlhood brilliance.

Importantly, the knowledge exchange and creation in SOLHOT is also multidirectional. The homegirls are not seen as the sole authority on knowledge as the space is for the shared knowledge between Black girls, women and all who show up in SOLHOT. We are all participants. As Sarah Projansky (2014) notes, SOLHOT is "imagining a different space that centers girls, not as adults think they should be, but as they are" (p.16). We intentionally resist implementing those things that replicate oppression, including hierarchical power. SOLHOT is against those things that threaten the expressions, memories and lived experiences of Black girlhood including white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, imperialism and capitalism. We critically resist those structures that deem Blacks girls as unworthy of freedom.

This space of SOLHOT has taken many forms in the past eight years as teaching tool, life saver, dissertation topic, and space of healing, amongst other things. These changes have resulted in heartbreak, bliss, love and even trauma. After a short hiatus in the physical space of SOLHOT, in 2014, we reorganized SOLHOT with the imperativeness that this new order be next level. There were three organizers, myself, Porshe Garner, and the visionary, Dr. Ruth Nicole Brown, still involved with SOLHOT in the physical space of the Champaign-Urbana community at this time. We were all committed to a new delivery of SOLHOT. With all of our SOLHOT organizing experience as the fuel, "We Levitate" was created.

Figure 2: Dr. Ruth Nicole Brown, Jessica Robinson, Porshe' R. Garner (R-L)

Photo Credit: TwoBrainz Photography

As I grapple with sonic black girlhood, it is important to discuss the origins of "We Levitate" and it's functions as a multimedia digital black girl band for the expression of the things most important in SOLHOT which ultimately articulate freedom for Black girls and those who love us. "We Levitate" was born out of SOLHOT. The next level thing we were looking for became music. With creativity at the center of all things SOLHOT, "WE Levitate" was born as a digital practice articulating the needs and wants of the collective. In true SOLHOT fashion, we are invested in changing the status quo through arts expression. SOLHOT already had an archival history of plays, photo exhibits, and dance performances and even a music project created by a homegirl years prior to "We Levitate". This new music, however, was our beginning

again after hiatus. We recommitted ourselves to our love for one another and our love for all things Black girlhood.

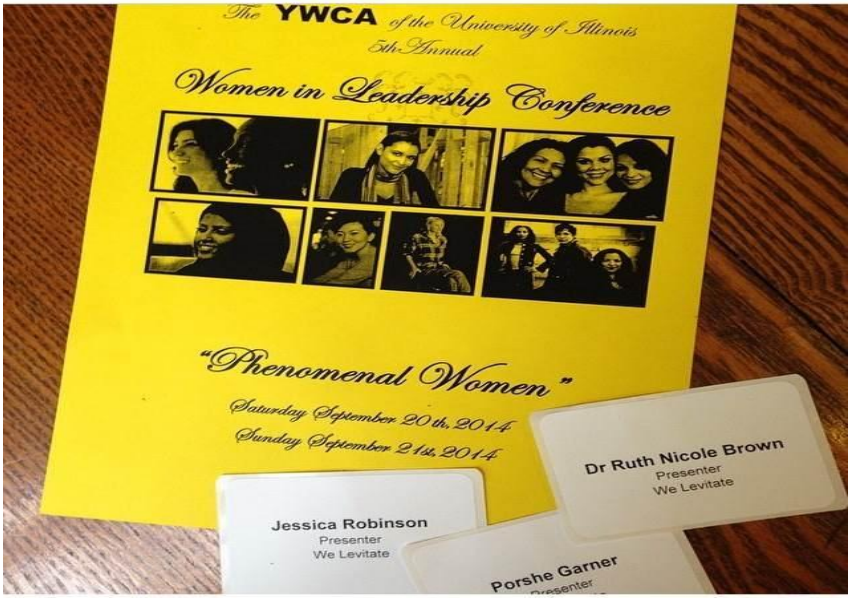

Figure 3: "We Levitate" performance lecture, September 2014

Photo Credit: Ruth Nicole Brown

Important to this music group is that we are "doing digital wrongly". While we were trying to find language to articulate what we were creating with this particular music, I was reminded of Erykah Badu who calls herself an "analog girl in a digital world" (Badu, 2000). Much like Badu's ability to sound like something from outer space and capture the sway of your hips and nod of your head with her songs and performances through using her voice, something she knows and is native to her, we were able to create and express our work through our voices and knowings- those things we know from being Black, woman, mothers, daughters, lovers, creators, etc and that are native to us. Doing digital wrongly looks like our lack of technical knowledge of studio equipment but still having the ability to create a song and record it along with this being the first time any of us, formally (because we have all been singers, rap singers

and the likes of Nina Simone, Amel Larrieux and Lil Kim in our heads at some point), had created a mixtape and performed this musical material live. Moreover, Ruth Nicole Brown, creative member of "We Levitate", details doing digital wrongly as a way to "re-imagine the collective, resound complex Black girlhood, remember relationships, reclaim the dirty work, and reverberate love for self, each other, and every kind of Black girl everywhere" (We Levitate, 2014). Doing digital wrongly is about thinking of the relationship of analog (original) and digital (next level) but also using both of those things to continue a legacy of Black girl freedom practices. So often digital, is thought of as something not accessible to certain populations, particularly working class Black women. Eric Henson, a scholar at the University of California-San Diego writes as a response to hearing the "We Levitate" music in conjunction with a talk given by Ruth Nicole Brown, about his ideas of "We Levitate" doing digital wrongly with respect to Hazel Carby's (2013) idea that technology or digital infrastructures are usually presented as a barrier for minority women. Carby examines the ways in which technology is presented as not accessible for women of color is constructed from a white western feminist perspective. He states, "in this case ("We Levitate") doing "digital wrongly" utilizes technology to build female networks that have been common in many gender/sex systems of color". "We Levitate" is a black girl band, sonically creating deliveries of the things that mean most to us as a practice of SOLHOT in the name of black girlhood.

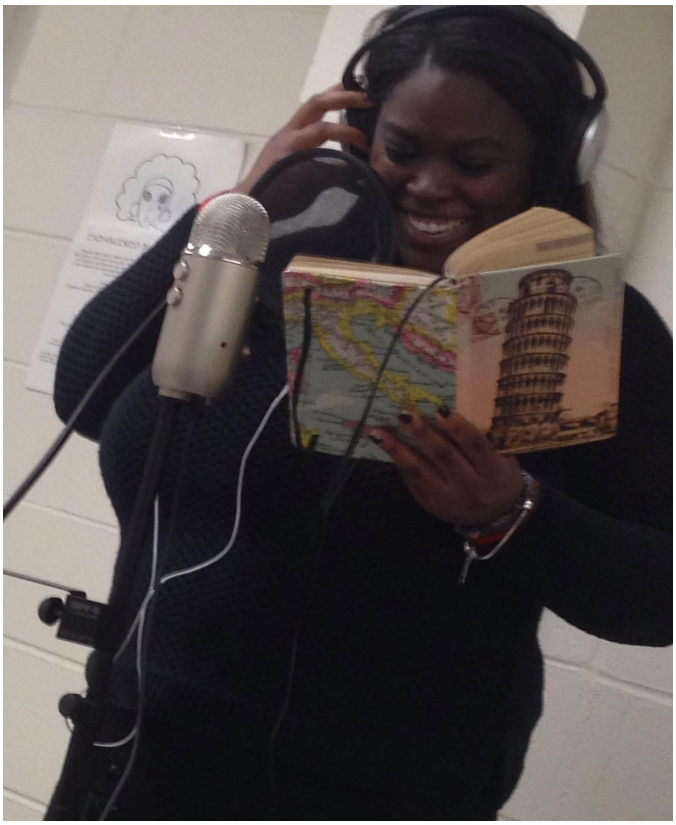

Figure 4: Porshe' Garner in studio, 2014

Photo Credit: Jessica Robinson

"We Levitate" centers the things that mean most to us and included in that is the ability to not only challenge what we don't like but make something that we do. "Jazzy Belle Retell/tale" was created in this SOLHOT filled space through my love and interactions with the people, my band mates, who made it possible for me to say the things I needed to say about Jazzy Belle. I was allowed to sonically transform the description of black girl Jazzy through the community of my band and the legacy of SOLHOT allowed that band to be created. In the next section, I will detail the process of making Jazzy Belle in this community as well as its function as an autoethnographic arts-based research project for decolonizing the research on Black girls.

SECTION 5

METHOD

As our collective, WE Levitate (also known as nextLevelSOLHOT) charged ourselves with making music in a Black girlhood according to SOLHOT, I studied Jazzy Belle and created the Jazzy Belle ReTell/Tale. My process can best be described through arts based research methodology. Arts-based research is defined by Patricia Leavy as the use of narrative inquiry, poetry, music, performance, dance, and visual art to perform research in ways that traditional forms cannot capture (2008). This methodological genre began in the 1970s when educational researchers such as Elliot Eisner (1976) and Maxine Greene (1975) started using the practice of artists and art critics to conduct research. As the field grows its purpose continues to place research and art together. In a 2006 article, Sinner et al. describe this as researchers applying the creative arts as "a mode of inquiry and representation that provides significant perspectives for making decisions regarding pedagogical theory, policy, and practice (p.1226-7)". In 2004, the term "a/r/tography" (Irwin, 2004; Irwin & de Cosso, 2004) began to explain the relationship between arts based research and connections to lived experiences. This framework allows for the acknowledgment of research practices as places of inquiry.

This music I was making in community with my musical band, was part research, part pleasure, part love and most importantly, all those things at once. My love for my bandmates, my remembrance of all those things that made me Black and girl and my want for black girls to be able to sound the sound we know best was a rethinking of what it means to create an arts based research research project, not for the help of art to make the research show differently, but for the

thing I wanted to show to be central. Those black girl memories, the creating of the song and the mere creation of the band reminded me of when Jan Jagodzinski in "Disturbing the Sensible" tells us that current arts based research practices need to be betrayed. She says:

> "to betray well becomes a way of thinking at the end of representation- when representation is no longer adequate to the take of inventing new potentials and styles of living. This is the beginning of what it might look like to live life as a work of art (p.31)".

I asked myself what is the betrayal that needs to be done and how it could be done. What I found was, Jazzy Belle Retell/Tale was a double betrayal. It was a betrayal of comfort we get from boxing in black girl images but it was also a betrayal of traditional investigation methods. The realization that, like Jagodzinski says, we must investigate what life as art looks like and in what ways do we do that? What are Black girls continuing to produce as life as art? How does Jazzy Belle ReTell change the game? Jazzy Belle ReTell in theory is a manifestation of a sonic life experienced by a Black girl. Jazzy Belle ReTell in practice is the showing of artful Black girl life. A deliberate living resistant of others wants and needs for Black girls, something not special to me individually but a story of a collective living of black girlhood. The very "living" of black girls are artful and our methods of inquiry must reflect that. I used mapping of my voice, experience and memory onto a document that was already created as my betrayal. I betrayed the initial music form and I betrayed representations of respectability/non living. The betrayal that Jagodzinski speaks of happened in more ways than one in the process of this ReTell/Tale. I not only was interested in disrupting the sonic narrative of Black girls (Jazzy Belles) but also the ways in which we research Black girls. Thus creating a possibility of sonic black girlhood as betrayal of domination.

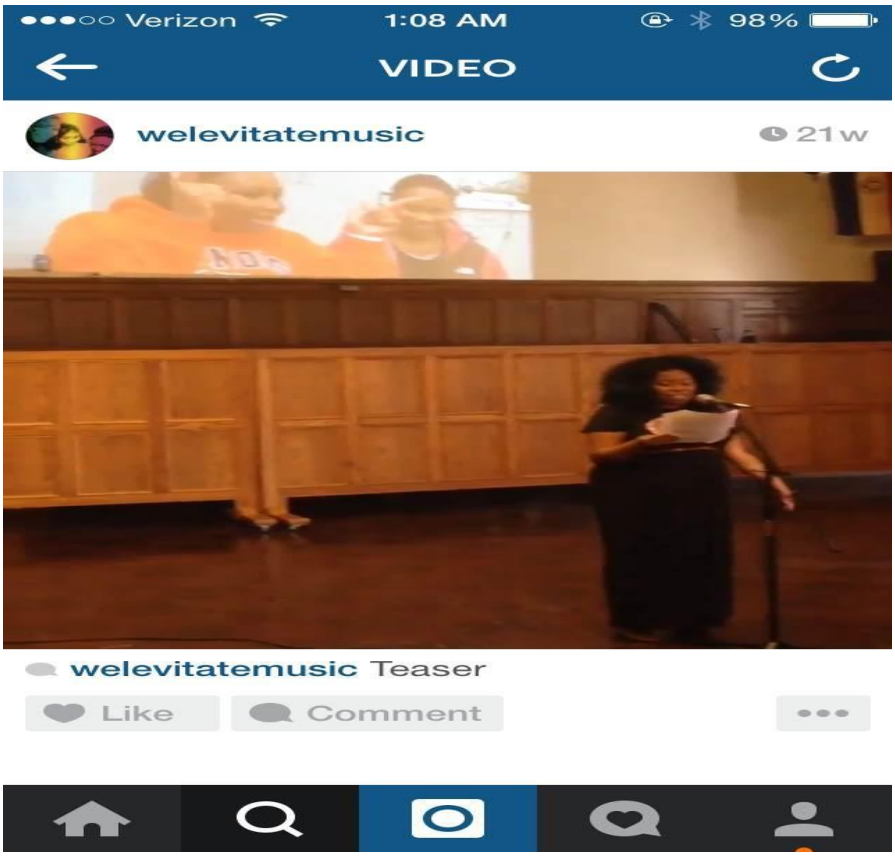

Figure 5: We Levitate Instagram snapshot of "Jazzy Belle" performance, Sept 2014.

Photo Credit: Ruth Nicole Brown

As I thought about my choice of making Jazzy Belle ReTell an intellectual product and not simply a hobby, I was reminded of Cynthia Dillard (2000) when she says it is when "our choices for methodology become a form of agency, a way to learn, think, and imagine something different, that is to transform taken-for-granted ways of knowing, especially in the academy" (p. 451). I was insistent that my methodology would not just "show" something about Black girlhood but "be" intentional in it's ability to be a tool of Black girlhood research and moreover, create a possibility for new ways of thinking of research.

Dwight Conquergood (2002) articulates that embracing "different ways of knowing is radical because it cuts to the root of how knowledge is organized in the academy" (pp. 145-46).

Admittedly, I was scared. I had experienced what bell hooks talks about in *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (2002) when she says, "Many of our students come to our classrooms believing that real brilliance is revealed by the will to disconnect and disassociate. They see this state as crucial to the maintenance of objectivism. They fear wholeness will lead them to be considered less "brilliant" (180). However, what I do know, as a student/participant in Solhot as a cite of Black girlhood research is that what black girls have to say is important, often overlooked, needed and also not always translated well to folks who are not invested in the lives of Black girls. I went to the literature of arts based research again. Liora Bresler (2005) reminds us that the "fluidity of sound and music, can sensitize us to the fluidity of personal and cultural experience, the heart of qualitative research". I am utilizing the making of that sound, the origin of that sound and the sound itself to engage that fluidity of those personal and cultural experiences. An example of this scholarship, is the work of artist-scholar Blair Ebony Smith. In her 2014 presentation at the National Women's Studies Association conference, she talked about her "MyRights(mndsgn.june.blend)" blend (2013), which not only interrogates her relationship to the words spoken by June Jordan in "Poem about My Rights" based on her black girl experience of transgressing ideas of queerness and black girl bodies but creates sonic possibilities of what troubling structures of domination sounds like intergenerationally. Music has the power to transgress the dominant power of showing, in particular, for black girls who are always critiqued for their sound. As Ruth Nicole Brown mentions in her appearance on "Left of Black" with Mark Anthony Neal (2014) "if there's freedom, it sounds a lot like loud, but we're totally in control of it usually". This statement by Brown, interrogates the very personal use of sound by black girls as a fluid lived artful being. The use of music as a method allows for those soundings to shine through in the most intentional way. The sound of black girl life in itself is a

melodic happening but a musical making of those experiences are centered in what I am naming as a "retell/tale".

As I consider how music can be disruptive to current practices of academic inquiry, knowledge production, and rethinking and social interaction, I think of the retell. The retell is a reimagining of a song in different sound, form (artist) or words. In the case of the music I produced in community with my artist/collective group, We Levitate, this remixed music I co-created is a retell of a popular song I used to love. In SOLHOT, it is code that we remake things that we want. I mapped my words and sounds onto the familiar OutKast track. I rewrote the words, and I put my stamp on the chorus. I inked that song with Black girl shimmer that could shine the darkest of days. A disruption in the form of sound of Black girlhood in narrative by retelling the story of Jazzy Belle- who was and still is me- and who should be recognized as human and important presently.

Jazzy Belle Retell/tale

Verse 1:
I got a rhyme and a reason
This is about pleasing
Want to Walk like u want
me to Talk like u want
You want to try
And package
And capture what you want
but my mind and my hips
was built like a ghost
Got you spooked
Nervous
Shaking in your boots
Trying to make sense
but this is real condense
imma muse
but fused
electric lady soul
Got a futurist swag
But I learned from the old
Folk tales and truths.

Thanks to ma dukes
Gave me light, love a whole lot of grub
Midwest representa with a little southern drawl
Named me heavyweight even
when I was super super small
They call me queen
I beam
From in and from out
The tweets call me love reign
Cuz I bring it in
and clear it out
see this is my shine
so dont take it lightly
when you've been through the fire
you lookin for mighty
heard a song years ago from two brothers that i loved
they called her jazzy belle
but the words were kinda smug
see jazzy was my homie so i had to do a retell
flipped remix
now this is for my real jazzy belles

Chorus:

cuz they can hate
all they want
and they say what they want but what's mine is mine
and aint nobody got time
and this is for my real jazzy belles
cuz they can hate
all they want
and they say what they want but what's mine is mine
and aint nobody got time

Verse 2:

twice upon a time
she was the one
folks forgot
always fade to the back
but what she was holding was a shock
little shy
called her daughter
watched the world with wide brown eyes
parents gold

gift from god
trying learn how to thrive and
never speak
only watch
scooping lessons from the block
soak up all
never knew
it was a gift
made her trip
beloved and divine
started writing
little rhymes
told a story
about her truth
even when it
made em loose
she lives in me
when the pressure high she comes out
immediately
trill OG
repeatedly
made opps frown
continuously
changing life game
tremendously
jazzy belle schoolin nahsayers w/much
fluditiy
this levitation is for
babymamas
bombshells
goody goodies
and baddie baddies
lifted higher than the sky
find us chillin on the cloud
coming from a
real jazzy belle

Chorus:

cuz they can hate
all they want
and they say what they want but what's mine is mine
and aint nobody got time
and this is for my real jazzy belles
cuz they can hate
all they want

and they say what they want but what's mine is mine
and aint nobody got time

Figure 6: Jazzy Belle performance Nov 2014

Photo Credit: Two Brainz Photography

It is important in this section to detail the process of how I created the ReTell/tale. As stated many times in this project, I love OutKast and I loved the song Jazzy Belle. It started with first investigating the actual words said by OutKast. I was able to extract four themes about Jazzy Belle addressed in the song: deceit, queendom, sex and flexing. These themes did not show

up mutually exclusive. In many of the lines, multiple themes showed up at the same time. Most important as reason for this mapping of themes in Jazzy Belle, was to get to the core of what a response would sound like. I had to know exactly what they were saying to/about Black girls in this song not just (but not without) my reaction to it. This is much like the 2001 song, "Chickenhead" by Project Pat ft. La Chat & Three 6 Mafia. In this song, Project Pat and LaChat are having a back and forth, seemingly battle of the sexes, but what most stands out, in relation to creating "Jazzy Belle", is the intentional addressing of everything each person is saying. A response exchange between the two about why or why not they were what the other said they were.

In this retell, I looked at the themes I pulled from the original song and told a Jazzy Belle's story about deceit, queendom, sex and flexing. Jazzy Belle's version of deceit looks like the irresistibility of black girls lives to want to be captured by dominant structures but our arsenal of brilliance, background and braids continuously resisting that capture. The deceit is that you just can't get enough of us and we just won't let you have us. The queendom in the retold version looks like our ability to resist or accept standards of being "good" enough to be royal, usually talked about in terms of being someone's queen, not for being royal in your own right. Ironically, in SOLHOT, I am called "Queen Jessica" but not because we subscribe to binary "queen" vs "hoes" categorization, but because my community named me that. The fluidity of being able to be so many things at once. Jazzy Belle, in the retell, uses the theme of sex to point to owning a sex prescribed body and using it for what she sees best. Lastly, flexing is Jazzy Belle's show off of who she is. A black girl. Born from other black girls. Loving other black girls. Loving OutKast. Being confused and mostly importantly, being all those things at once, and the brilliance and beauty of that.

Figure 7: Jessica Robinson, Nov 2014

Photo Credit: Two Brainz Photography

Importantly, there are two parts to this retell/tale's delivery that matter theoretically and practically for the purpose of this project. There are the lyrics, textual representation of the way music can operate as a qualitative inquiry, and also the performed music. In the previous section, I detail the ways I worked with the textual representation of the retell/tale for purpose of analyzing it as data. In this section, I detail more of the performance side of this music for the purpose of better understanding Jazzy Belle Retell/tale as a method for decolonizing research. To create Jazzy Belle Retell/tale I had to use my body. I was the subject, I was the research, I was the creator. Jazzy Belle took me some time to create. The effects of using my own body as data proved to be an experience much harder to detail and capture into words. I do know what it felt

like. When I finished writing Jazzy Belle Retell/tale, I felt exposed. It was the use of resources not contained in a bookstore, not able to be purchased with my graduate stipend. I had to interrogate the things I had with me personally and from my cultural experiences- something much harder than measuring quantitative numbers or "effectiveness". This is where autoethnography informs this project. In the most apparent way, autoethnography operates in a literal way in this project which is defined by Carolyn Ellis (2004) as "research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political (p.xix)". However, in a less obvious way, this project is auto ethnographic because it required so much of me as a resource. In other words, the labor of putting myself on the line, as many of Black women writers, teachers and foremothers have done, created a new meaning for "auto" for me. I thought about my body in the way Kimari Brand talks about her work regarding twerking. In the video project "Twerk It Girl" by Irma Garcia (2014), Brand talks about thinking of her experiences with reading Audre Lorde's "The Uses of the Erotic" (1984) and connecting it to her experience studying abroad in the Caribbean. She was able to couple the power of Audre Lorde's pivotal text on the erotic and the pleasure and imperativeness of body autonomy with the idea that fighting for land rights was much like fighting for body autonomy. What makes this most like my relationship to "Jazzy Belle" is thinking of my body and research on black girl lives and bodies as an urgent matter of decolonization. If I think of my body as a Black girl/woman as landscape occupied by those who don't originate or live on it but want the rights to name, claim and steal it through words, research and structures then I used the "auto" in autoethnography to evict those things that wish to take over my body, experience and freedom.

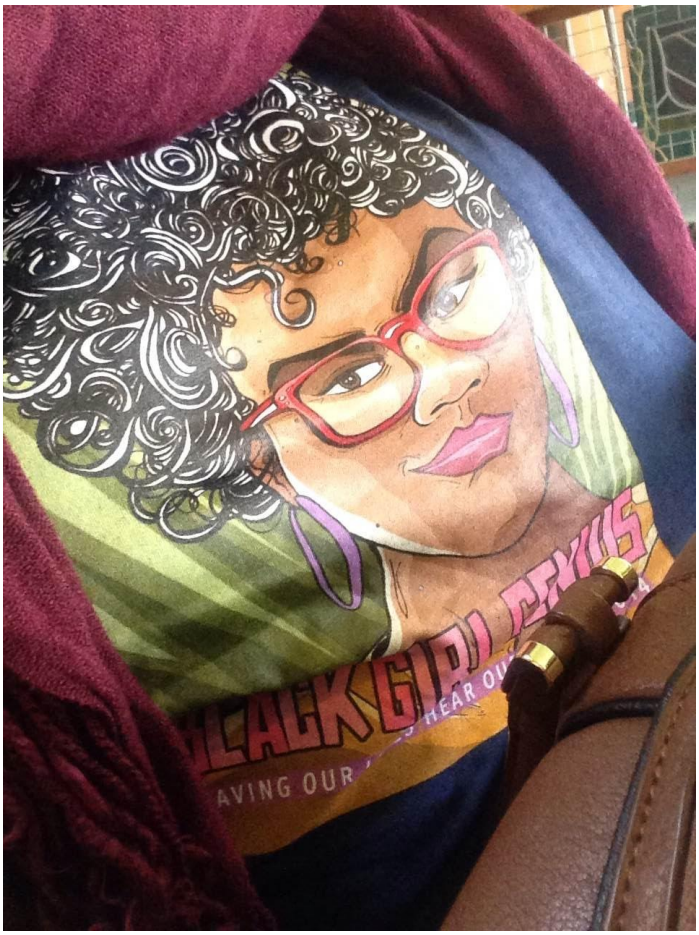

Figure 8: Black Girl Genius Week shirt, November 2014

Photo Credit: Jessica Robinson

I performed Jazzy Belle several times in 2014 with the last performance happening on November 7th during an anti- conference titled “Black Girl Genius Week”. At this performance I felt the power of what Jazzy Belle had done to me. It was the first time I remembered all the words. It was the first time I made the sound I was looking for. It was the first time performing it in front of a large crowd with many people who I actually knew. My bandmate turned to me that night and said “I think you levitated, like you lifted from the ground!” Once again, Jazzy Belle rearranged me in ways of thinking, writing and feeling through my body as black and girl.

Figure 9: Black Girl Genius Week Jazzy Belle performance, November 8th, 2014

Photo Credit: Two Brainz Photography

I have detailed Jazzy Belle's connection to arts based research as a methodology through rethinking research method. I have also discussed the analysis of "Jazzy Belle Retell/tale" as data for this project. Furthermore, I have linked all these things to my understanding of how research can be decolonized through auto ethnographic arts based research projects like "Jazzy Belle Retell/tale". In the next section, I will discuss the possibilities of a sonic black girlhood framework in context of (or in conversation with) Brown's theory of the creative potential of black girlhood (2014).

SECTION 6
CONCLUSION

In the previous sections, I have detailed the creation, purpose, method and context of creating the "Jazzy Belle Retell/tale". As a discussion of next steps for what I am calling "sonic black girlhood", I want to engage more on what that means and looks like in terms of black girlhood studies. I initially spoke about sonic black girlhood in a 2014 article on organizing and activism for Imaging America[1]. In that article I offer the effects of thinking of sonic black girlhood. I state "to decolonize Black girlhood through creation of sound is to unmark the bodies and minds of Black girls from what we think we know is best for them". When teased out this means moving toward a politic of black girl brilliance through what Black girls say and feel. I take my cue from Ruth Nicole Brown's latest book "Hear Our Truths" (2013). In this book, she offers a frame named "creative potential of black girlhood". She describes this as a multitude of things but most important to what I'm conceptualizing through sonic black girlhood is the idea that "black girls know alot, and Black girls who organize Black women who organize through Black girlhood are profoundly productive when they know what the know and also when they know that Black girls know better (p.187)".

I am working from Brown's idea of creative potential of Black girlhood to think more about what Black girls know and how they show what they know and I locate those moments within music such as with "Jazzy Belle Retell/tale". With music as such an integral part of Black life and specifically Black girlhood, I am looking to develop language for the knowing that comes from the connections of Black girlhood and music. Therefore to build a working definition, sonic black girlhood is:

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[1] Imagining America is a group of universities and organizations dedicated to the public and civic uses of the humanities, arts and design. http://imaginingamerica.org

1) the expression of Black girl truth through music;
2) interrogates the relationship between black girls and music making, consumption and performing
3) privileges the sound of Black girl play, labor and artful living as a site of knowing
4) informed theoretically by black girlhood (Brown, 2009), and hip hop feminism (Brown & Kwakye, 2012; Durham; 2009; Pough, Richardson, Durham, & Raimist, 2007) as well as by the relationships of Black women and girls working in community with each other.

Sonic black girlhood can happen in episodic moments as illustrated by Aisha Durham in her 2014 book, "Home with Hip Hop Feminism". Durham uses autoethnography to take us through the moments of sound, writing and memories she has throughout her life as Black woman as an active theorizing of her experiences. Sonic Black girlhood can also happen in the ways scholar Regina Bradley remembers the South through song, in her writings about Southern Hip Hop artists such as OutKast and T.I. (2014). Furthermore, it can also happen through the memory of beauty shop radio playlists where you learned what R&B teaches us about love, life and "sanging" it through. It can show up in many different ways but most important is the practice of doing it or using it must look like innovation and transformation and not the replication of domination. In my conceptualization of sonic black girlhood, Black girls and the structure of black girlhood largely, is broad and unbound by categories that have for too long been given to Black girls as a telling of what is best for Black girls opposed to allowing agency of their experiences. This framework looks at what girls already have and already use to create a reflection of the brilliance of our artful lives articulated through black girlhood.

Sonic Black girlhood raises questions about the way we use our bodies to learn and teach. First, I am thinking about the history of Black American communication and what sonic black

girlhood means for blackness, education (teach and learning) and freedom. As a people who were sanctioned by the State against writing and reading once upon a time, not too long ago, and had to create code for feeling, loving and living, I am thinking of what sound means for Black girls in particular. What does the feeling of listening to reviving vibrations mean for Black girls lives? Black girls are always sounding through talking, music, laughing, and even silence, what are the connections historically to that communication and what do those connections mean for futures? In particular to music, what does the connection of praise song (whether through gospel or R&B artists) mean for our codes of feeling, loving and living as connected to freedom and rejection of the colonial project? How does the format of music, opposed to paper, change the consumption of intellectual products? How does that change when the producers are Black and girl? Moreover, I am thinking about how the theories of hip hop feminism in connection to Black feminism offers to facilitate with what those soundings of life for Black girls mean and if there are other disciplines to investigate for deeper understanding. In particular, I am interested in what ethnomusicology and sound studies have to say, or not say, about these soundings as a cultural practice. I would also link this framework to gender and women's studies as a practice of pleasure. What does this connection to sound as a way to feel, live and love mean for pleasure or a rethinking of trauma. In "We Levitate" we used music to begin again with our work through heartbreak. The feeling of pleasure and trauma and the healing of love and search for freedom allowed for us to feel our way back to a pulse for our work. Work that we so love and so connects us in ways only felt through vibration. What does that mean for the connection of music to constructing freedom.

I offer this framework as interdisciplinary and in future research would like to explore the ways in which this is supported. Furthermore, in future research, I would like to investigate the ways in which this sonic black girlhood manifests in the music being produced and

consumed. From mainstream artist influence of memory of music to my own written and produced music, I want to investigate the ways in which the possibilities of a sonic black girlhood manifests as a praxis of freedom people who live as Black girls. This link is the Soundcloud, a digital music media platform, link to “JazzyBelle ReTell/Tale”.

This is what sonic black girlhood sounds like

https://soundcloud.com/solhot-next-level/jazzybelle-retell-1.

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